

Henri Collet

BRIVIESCA

poema para guitarra op. 67



front cover:

José Maria Val Citores

“BRIVIESCA”

(oil on canvas)

private collection - Briviesca (Spain)

back cover:

Julio Lopez Hernández

THE ANDRÉS SEGOVIA MONUMENT

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FOREWORD



HENRI COLLET (1885-1951)

The French composer, writer, pianist, musicologist and hispanicist Henri Collet was born on November 5th, 1885, in Paris, and spent his childhood in Bordeaux, where his father worked as a railway engineer. The Collet household was a musical one, Henri's father being skilled on ten instruments. At the age of three, Henri began to play the piano, making rapid progress. Indeed, the young Henri Collet was something of an all-round prodigy, being awarded his *baccalauréat* at the early age of fourteen-and-a-half, by special dispensation of the president.⁽¹⁾

Collet pursued his piano studies at the Bordeaux conservatory, where his teacher was Joseph Thibaud, brother of the famous violinist Jacques Thibaud; some years later Collet was to study harmony and counterpoint under Déodat de Séverac. From an early age, however, Spanish culture fascinated him: «*Le seul nom de l'Espagne me faisait rêver*» («Just the name Spain would make me dream») he was later to write. Accordingly, his father suggested that he continue his studies in Spain, with the object of becoming a Spanish teacher. This suggestion was eagerly accepted by the young Collet, who in 1902 – at the age of seventeen – set out for Spain, where he remained for more than a

decade. During this time he returned to France only to take his *agrégation* (the prestigious and competitive examination for a teaching diploma), and to present his doctoral thesis in 1913.

During his long Spanish sojourn he not only mastered Castillian Spanish, but also researched Spanish music extensively (both folk music and art music). These researches had their outcome in numerous musicological publications, a notable early one being his doctoral thesis *Le mysticisme musical espagnol au XVI^{ème} siècle* (Paris, 1913). During Collet's time in Spain, his musical education continued under the direction of Felipe Pedrell, Federico Olmeda and Manuel de Falla, all of whom became friends.

As a newly qualified teacher, the young Collet became a lecturer at the *Institut français d'Espagne* in Madrid, where he taught Spanish folklore, much of his material being based on his own researches conducted during his long expeditions in the Spanish countryside. From this period dates the start of his friendships with Albéniz, Granados, Turina and many other musicians and intellectuals. Another friendship begun in Spain was, ironically, with another French composer, albeit one who shared Collet's obsession with Spanish culture: Raoul Laparra (1876-1943). Much of Laparra's music, like Collet's, is deeply imbued with the spirit of Spain. Collet and Laparra were to remain firm friends until Laparra's untimely death in an air-raid during the second world war. Like Collet, Laparra was to compose a piece for Segovia in the 1920s, but it remains lost.

(1) The *baccalauréat* is French school-leaving certificate, usually taken at the age of 17 or 18 after seven years of secondary education, covering a broad range of subjects and qualifying the holder to enter university.

On his permanent return to France, Collet became a lecturer at the *Institut d'études hispaniques* and at the *Collège Chaptal* in Paris. He continued his musical studies, however, with Gabriel Fauré. Journalism became another of his interests: from 1920/25, he was a frequent contributor to the journal *Comoedia*, writing about current musical activities in Paris. Two articles from this publication have ensured Collet's journalistic immortality. In the issues dated January 16th and 23rd, 1920, Collet surveyed six promising French composers: Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc and Germaine Tailleferre. He dubbed these composers *Les six*, and the label has now become a standard part of the musical lexicon. From roughly the same period dates Collet's book *Albéniz et Granados*.⁽²⁾

From the mid-1920s onwards, Collet also wrote a weekly column "Espagne" in the musical periodical *Le ménestrel*. In this column Collet gives brief reports on the musical life of Spain and the activities of its musicians. These items were probably culled from the pages of Spanish newspapers, for Collet was now firmly based in Paris. In Collet's column we read about Segovia's successful tours in South America, North America, Europe and elsewhere. Clearly Collet always held Segovia in high regard.

For several years in the 1920s Collet acted as a musical adviser to the Princess de Polignac, the famous American-born millionaire Winnaretta Singer, who commissioned many works from composers such as Manuel de Falla, Francis Poulenc and Igor Stravinsky. Collet's selfless help and advice contributed greatly to the success of the Polignac salon, one of the most highly regarded musical salons in Paris.⁽³⁾ From 1929 onwards this role was largely taken over by Nadia Boulanger.

In 1929, Collet won the *Prix national de littérature* for his novel *L'île de Barataria*, and in 1937 was awarded the *Prix musical de la ville de Paris* for his comic opera *Le chèvre d'or*. Operas, ballets and incidental music indeed form a large part of Collet's output, but there are also many piano works and songs, two "flamenco" concertos (one for violin, the other for piano), a *Symphonie de l'Alhambra*, and several chamber works. His list of prose writings is also long. Sadly, at his death in Paris on November 23rd, 1951, he left unfinished a book on his friend and teacher Manuel de Falla, who once glowingly described him as «an apostle for modern Spanish music».

COLLET, SEGOVIA AND «BRIVIESCA»

In view of Collet's long association with Spain, and in view of Collet's and Segovia's mutual friends, of whom Falla was a leading example, it is quite possible that Collet knew about Segovia before the famous Parisian début concert of April 7th, 1924, which marked the start of Segovia's fame outside Spain and Latin America. Whether Collet and Segovia had actually met prior to this concert, however, is more doubtful, as is indicated by an undated letter from Segovia to Collet written in Paris, probably around September 1924.⁽⁴⁾ Among other things, the letter shows that Segovia certainly knew about Collet before he came to Paris in 1924:

«V. era uno de los elegidos por mí antes de llegar a Francia, después no en balde abrigaba la esperanza de que su amor a nuestra bella España, le acercaría bondadosamente a mi instrumento, tan netamente español, y le prestaría su concurso.»

(2) First edition 1919; second edition 1948.

(3) Jean Gallois, *Les Polignacs*, Éditions du Rocher, 1995 (page 187).

(4) Segovia's letters to Collet are held in the private collection of Collet's daughter (Madame M.-T. Clostre-Collet, Paris).

[«You were one of the ones I selected before coming to France, and afterwards it wasn't for nothing that I cherished the hope that your love of our wonderful Spain would come across to my instrument, so very Spanish, and lend it your support.»]

In this letter Segovia goes on to say that he has had a quick look at Collet's guitar piece, which he hopes to play in Madrid. Segovia says he thinks it will be well suited to the guitar, apart from a section towards the end where the music is in sixths with the melody on top.

In another letter – also undated but evidently a sequel to the letter above, and also written in Paris – Segovia reports to Collet that since September (presumably referring to their last correspondence or meeting) he has played 83 concerts, in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France and Spain. He cites his busy concert schedule as the reason for not having been in touch with Collet. This second letter must have been written many months after the Paris debut concert, because Segovia is known to have toured extensively in Europe later that year. Segovia refers to two forthcoming concerts in the letter, presumably in Paris, on the 6th and the 13th. As Segovia is known to have performed on May 6th and 13th, 1925, at the Paris conservatory, we can conclude that the second letter was probably written in late April or early May, 1925. From this dating, we deduce the date of the earlier letter to be around September 1924.

Segovia reports in this second letter that despite the progress he and Collet made with the piece at their last meeting (the preceding September), it was still causing problems, and he suggests another meeting at which he hopes they can resolve the difficulties.

Whatever further meetings there were between Collet and Segovia, the difficulties with the piece appear to have remained unresolved, and there is no record of Segovia ever playing it publicly, or anything else by Collet.

Several years later, in June 1932, in a letter to his friend the composer Manuel Ponce, Segovia took the opportunity to comment on some uncharacteristically poor reviews he had recently received in Paris, and speculates that the reason for the bad reviews might be his non-performance of works written for him by composers based in Paris, who also happened to be influential in the musical press. Among the composers he names is Henri Collet.⁽⁵⁾ Segovia's insinuation seems more than a little unfair to Collet, who was always a generous supporter of Segovia, and never ceased to refer to him as a great artist.

Although Segovia neither played nor published Collet's piece, its existence was certainly no secret. Emilio Pujol refers to it in his long entry on the guitar published in 1927 in Lavignac's *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du conservatoire*, and the guitarist Regino Sainz de la Maza – in an article in the Spanish newspaper *El imparcial* dated March 21th, 1933 – refers to a piece by Collet.⁽⁶⁾ However, until the discovery of *Briviesca* in May 2001, no guitar piece by Collet was known in the guitar world.

«BRIVIESCA»

The manuscript of Collet's *Briviesca* was found on Monday May 7th, 2001, in Linares (the town of Segovia's birth), by Angelo Gilardino, artistic director of the Segovia Foundation, among some musical manuscripts left by Segovia in his Madrid studio and subsequently transferred to Linares after his death by his wife. The manuscript is undated,

(5) *The Segovia-Ponce letters*, edited by Miguel Alcázar, Editions Orphée, Columbus, 1989 (page 117).

(6) In late 1926 Regino Sainz de la Maza included a transcription of Collet's *Bolero* (almost certainly n. 4 of the second set of *Chants de Castille*, 1921, op. 62–66) in a concert in Paris.

but entitled *Briviesca*, *poema para guitarra*, op. 67. It is natural to assume that this manuscript must therefore be the piece referred by Segovia in his letters to Collet, discussed above. Before drawing this conclusion, however, we should assess the evidence.

According to the composer's daughter (Madame M.-T. Clostre-Collet), Segovia made his own transcriptions of some of Collet's piano pieces, in addition to receiving one or more guitar pieces from the composer.⁽⁷⁾ Two pieces of evidence, however, suggest very strongly that the letters from Segovia to Collet discussed above do refer to *Briviesca*. First, there is Segovia's reference to his difficulties with a passage in sixths, with a melody above, towards the end of the piece. This description exactly fits bars 104 to 131 of *Briviesca*. Secondly, there is the extensive re-working of the piece to make it playable, which the letters testify to and which are abundantly visible on the manuscript.

A complication arises, however, from the fact that Collet's *Briviesca* also exists as a piano piece, published by Salabert. The published score is dated 1921. Is the present guitar piece therefore simply a transcription of an earlier piano piece? The answer could be «yes», but if so, the transcription was by Collet rather than Segovia because the musical handwriting is Collet's (the amendments are in Segovia's hand).

If we accept that the letters discussed above refer to *Briviesca*, and if we accept the dating of the letters as being from 1924 and 1925, then it appears that at the time when Segovia was working on *Briviesca*, the composition had already existed in some form for about three years. But we should beware of assuming that *Briviesca* is therefore originally a piano piece, for we do not know how long the guitar manuscript existed before Segovia had it. Also,

we should bear in mind that the piano score does not bear the inscription *poema para guitarra*. This is perhaps not a surprise, but its inclusion on the guitar score at least supports two other possibilities: that the guitar piece preceded the piano piece (and the date 1921 on the published piano score may be the date of the first version of the work, as a guitar piece), or that Collet had conceived the work in terms of the guitar, even though the piano score preceded the guitar score. Pending the appearance of further evidence, there seems no way to resolve this conundrum at present.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Madame M.-T. Clostre-Collet for permission to quote from her father's letters, and for information relating to her father. I am also grateful to Sean Scrivener for his translation of the extract from Segovia's letter to Collet.

Allan Clive Jones

Northamptonshire (UK), December 2001.

THE COMPOSITION

Henri Collet's *Briviesca*, as written by the composer, is unplayable, and the manuscript shows us Andrés Segovia's intricate attempts to bring it within his own immense capabilities. The difficulties he was unsuccessfully grappling with are also apparent in the letters he wrote to the composer. In the end, he abandoned all notions of playing the work at all.

This was indeed a pity, because *Briviesca* is one of those Spanish pieces from the musical lineage of Albéniz and Granados. The guitar repertoire had incorporated many pieces by Albéniz and Granados, as transcriptions from piano pieces (a tradition begun by Tárrega, and continued by Llobet and Segovia). It is surprising, in a

(7) Which pieces Segovia transcribed is not known (Madame M. T. Clostre-Collet, interview with the author, June 1998).

way, that Segovia, who had already created marvels with his transcriptions from piano pieces by Spanish romantic composers, felt unable to go beyond simply editing the piece, and did not radically re-think it. The sombre beauty of the piece – inspired by a village of Castilla (near Burgos) – could well have brought to his repertoire the same atmosphere and appeal of one of Albéniz's musical post-cards, similarly named after Spanish towns or regions. We will never know how and why Briviesca did not take its place alongside Albéniz's *Sevilla* and *Granada* in Segovia's programs, but it is not unthinkable that, in the hands of the great guitarist, it could have become a musical portrait of equal charm.

However, we at least have the music, and we have the composer's wishes, as declared in the inscription *poema para guitarra* and the work's dedication to Segovia. These things openly speak of a guitar piece. Thus we feel fully justified in making it completely playable on the instrument for which it was, if not perfectly written, at least perfectly imagined.

To be frank, it has not been a matter of editing the work, but of re-writing it for guitar from an

original that was impossibly written for the instrument. We had to change the key, and to re-construct the texture according to our judgement that the work is ideally suited on the guitar to three-part voice-leading (with, of course, occasional denser and less dense passages). Within this general framework, we have made several adjustments in order to create a true guitar piece. We have not omitted to consult the piano version, but of course we have based our work on the manuscript for guitar.

Included in this edition is a reproduction of the manuscript. Owing to its confusing condition, we are not sure that it will be of much help to readers, but at least it will allow them to see how difficult the preparation of this edition has been, and what patience and faith an editor must sometimes display !

We have to acknowledge the helpful assistance of our co-editor Luigi Biscaldi and of the young Spanish guitarist Roberto Moron, who read the first draft of our version during the Summer 2001.

Angelo Gilardino

Vercelli (Italy), December 2001.



*original drawing by Henri Collet
(courtesy of Madame Clostre-Collet)*

para Andrés Segovia

BRIVIESCA

poema para guitarra

Edited by
Angelo Gilardino
and Luigi Biscaldi

op. 67

Henri Collet
(1885-1951)

Melancólico

0
mf

4

8

12

sonoro

rit.

CI ————— CI —————

16 *p*

19

22

25 *cresc.*

28 *rit.* *p*

31

CIV

34

CIV

37

40

CII

43

CI

46

1 3 0 1 2

49

2 4 2

3 0

4 4 2

52

3 4 2

3 4 2

3 4 2

p sonoro

55

3 4 2

3 4 2

3 4 2

58

3 4 2

3 4 2

3 4 2

61 CIV

CVI

cresc.

64 CVII

67

70 CII

rall. *marcato*

73 CII

76 CVII

pp sonoro

79 CII

cresc.
mf

82 CII CV

85 CIII

cresc. poco

88 CVIII

dim.

91

CI

rit. cresc.

sfz

94

CI

97

CIV

CI

100

CV

CI

103

CVII

CIII

l'accompagnement toujours égale et lié

106

1 1 0 1 3 0 4 3

CIII

109

4 3 1 2 0 1 0

CIII

112

4 3 0 1 2 0

CIII

115

1 1 0 3 3 4 0

CIII

118

1 3 0 1 2 0 1 2 0

CIII

121

sfz

CV

124

CV

CI

allarg.

127

CI

CII

130

rit.

CIII

cresc.

133

CV

sec